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APPARATUS FOR ILLUMINATING A PORTABLE ELECTRONIC OR COMPUTING DEVICE

This App. is a cont of SN. 09/330,322 filed Jun. 11, 1999, P.N. 6/86,636

5 Field of the Invention

The present invention is in the field of lighting devices for portable electronic or computing devices.

Background of the Invention

10 Compact electronic devices with a viewing screen or keypads have become very common and quite popular. Such devices have been popular for a number of years in connection with hand-held, portable, battery-powered gaming devices. A well-known example of such a device, that has sold millions of units, is the GAME BOY® device sold by Nintendo. More recently, other electronic devices have also included viewing
15 screens, such as portable video cameras and cellular phones. And, of course, portable computers have long had viewing screens. Although the complexity and cost of such devices can vary greatly, it is common for such devices to use a generally flat, liquid crystal display screen.

Flat, liquid crystal display screens work very well in a well-lit area. However,
20 when such devices are used in dimly lit areas, or at night, it can be difficult, if not impossible, for a user to see anything in the viewing screen. This problem is magnified when such a screen is used in a device that is meant to be portable, and especially when it is a small device.

If a portable device is sufficiently complex, and generally more expensive, such
25 as a portable laptop computer, the device can include lighting within the actual device.

An example of such lighting is a portable laptop computer with a backlit screen.

However, this solution is not always economically practical, nor does it necessarily solve the problem in smaller devices. Also, if an electronic device does not have a viewing screen, then this option is not even available.

5 To solve this problem, especially in connection with hand-held, portable, battery-powered gaming devices, a number of different solutions have been proposed. Such solutions have typically included add-on devices with their own source of electrical power. These devices can be designed to fit onto the electronic device or be designed for use in connection with the electronic device. However, because such devices use their own source of electrical power, they tend to be rather bulky and heavy. In addition, the second source of electrical power increases cost and creates the possibility of another source of power failure.

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15 Accordingly, there is a long felt need for a simple, economical, device that can illuminate portable electronic or computing devices without the drawbacks associated with prior illumination devices.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

20 The present invention is generally directed to an apparatus for illuminating a portable electronic device that plugs into the electronic device and is powered by the power source of the electrical device through an electronic connection to a utility power jack of the electronic device. The present invention is also generally directed to an apparatus for illuminating a portable computing device with a display screen that plugs

into the computing device and is powered by the power source of the computing device through an electronic connection to a port in connection with a power source.

In a first, separate aspect of the present invention, the illumination device is a light emitting diode. A white light diode is especially preferred.

5 In another, separate aspect of the present invention, the illumination apparatus includes a plug that has a second utility power jack or port adapted to receive a second plug that is in electrical communication with the utility power jack or port.

In still another, separate aspect of the present invention, the illumination apparatus can include a flexible arm. This flexible arm can be adjusted as to adjust the height or angle of the illumination device relative to the portable electronic or computing device. In addition, other devices, such as a diffuser, a magnifier, or a regulator for varying the intensity of light, can also be added to the illumination apparatus.

Accordingly, it is a primary object of the present invention to provide a low-cost, practical and improved illumination apparatus for a portable electronic device that is powered by a utility jack of the electronic device.

It is also a primary object of the present invention to provide a low-cost, practical and improved illumination apparatus for a portable computing device that is powered by a utility port of the computing device.

This and further objects and advantages will be apparent to those skilled in the art in connection with the drawing and the detailed description of the preferred embodiment set forth below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a schematic representation of a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Figure 1 illustrates how a preferred embodiment of the present invention can be used with a portable electronic game device, such as a GAME BOY® device. Although this drawing depicts a portable electronic game device, the invention is adaptable to any portable electronic device that has a utility power jack in electrical connection with a power source, such as a cellular phone or a video camera.

In the preferred embodiment shown in Figure 1, the electronic device 1 has a viewing screen 2, a power source and a utility power jack. The power source and utility power jacks are not visible and are shown generally as 3 and 4, because their location and configuration will vary depending upon the design of a given portable electronic device. The power source 3 may be self-contained, such as batteries in a battery compartment. The power source 3 may or may not be augmented by a plug-in capability to a non-portable power source, such as a wall outlet.

The illumination apparatus, shown generally as 5, includes a plug, shown generally as 6, for plugging the illumination apparatus 5 into the utility power jack 4 of the electronic device 1. The exact configuration of the plug 6 should be designed so as to mate with the utility power jack 4 and create a mechanical and electrical connection between the utility power jack 4 and the plug 6 when the apparatus 5 is plugged into the electronic device 1.

The illumination apparatus 5 also includes a body 7 and an illumination device 8. The body 7 connects the illumination device 8 to the plug 6, and the body is preferably comprised of a flexible arm. The illumination device 8 is electrically connected to the utility power jack 4 through the plug 6 and the body 7 so that the illumination device 8 is powered by the power source 2 when the illumination apparatus 5 is plugged into the electronic device 1. The electrical connection between the illumination device 8 and the plug 6 can be by any suitable means, such as by a wire (not shown). It is especially preferred that the body 7 can be adjusted, when the apparatus 5 is plugged into the utility power jack 4, to adjust the height and/or the angle of the illumination device 8 relative to the electronic device 1.

In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, the illumination device 8 is comprised of a light emitting diode ("LED") 9 housed in a case housing 10. The housing 10 can also include suitable electronics, such as a resistor 11, or a regulator (not shown) for varying the intensity of light given off by the LED. In an especially preferred embodiment, the LED 9 is a white light diode. The housing can also include additional features, such as a diffuser lens 9, or a magnifier (not shown).

When the plug 6 of the illumination apparatus 5 is plugged into the utility power jack 4 of the electronic device 1, it necessarily occupies the connection that the utility power jack 4 would otherwise provide to a user of the electronic device 1. Because a user of the electronic device 1 might need to connect some other device to the utility power jack 4, it is especially preferred that the plug 6 be constructed so as to include a second utility power jack 12. The second utility power jack 12 is adapted to receive a second plug and provide a mechanical and electrical connection for the second plug

equivalent to that which is provided by the utility power jack 4. Thus, the second utility power jack 12 will provide electrical communication for the second plug with the utility power jack 4 when the second plug is plugged into the plug 6 and the plug 6 is plugged into the utility power jack 4.

5 The present invention is also adaptable to a portable computing device with a display screen that is not illuminated by the portable computing device. In such an embodiment, the illumination apparatus is plugged into a utility port of the computing device in electrical connection with a power source instead of the utility power jack 4 of the electronic device 1. In such a device, the utility port can be any port that allows connection of additional products or communication devices, or cables, or any additional accessory or product. The illumination apparatus can have a second utility port adapted to receive a second plug that is in electrical communication with the utility port when the second plug is plugged into the plug and the plus is plugged into the utility port. In all other respects, the structure and function of the illumination apparatus would be the same as for the illumination apparatus 5 described above in connection with electronic device 1.

It will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art that still further changes and modifications in the actual concepts described herein can readily be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the following claims.

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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An apparatus for illuminating a portable electronic device having a utility power jack in electrical connection with a power source, comprising:
a plug for plugging the apparatus into the utility power jack;
5 a body connected to the plug; and
an illumination device attached to the body and electrically connected to the utility power jack through the plug and the body;
wherein the illumination device is powered by the power source when the apparatus is plugged into the utility power jack.

10 2. An apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the illumination device is comprised of a light emitting diode.

3. An apparatus as recited in claim 2, wherein the portable electronic device is an electronic game device.

15 4. An apparatus as recited in claim 2, wherein the portable electronic device has a display screen that is not illuminated by the portable electronic device.

5. An apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the plug has a second utility power jack adapted to receive a second plug that is in electrical communication with the utility power jack when the second plug is plugged into the plug and the plug is plugged into the utility power jack.

20 6. An apparatus as recited in claim 2, wherein the plug has a second utility power jack adapted to receive a second plug that is in electrical communication with the utility power jack when the second plug is plugged into the plug and the plug is plugged into the utility power jack.

7. An apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the body is comprised of a flexible arm.

8. An apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the body can be adjusted, when the apparatus is plugged into the utility power jack, to adjust the height of the illumination device relative to the portable electronic device.

9. An apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the body can be adjusted, when the apparatus is plugged into the utility power jack, to adjust the angle of the illumination device relative to the portable electronic device.

10. An apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the body further comprises a diffuser for diffusing light given off by the illumination device.

11. An apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the body further comprises a magnifier.

12. An apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the body further comprises a regulator for varying the intensity of light given off by the illumination device.

13. An apparatus as recited in claim 2, wherein the light emitting diode is a white light diode.

14. An apparatus for illuminating a portable computing device with a display screen, the apparatus also having a utility port in electrical connection with a power source, comprising:

- a plug for plugging the apparatus into the utility port;
- a body connected to the plug; and
- a light emitting diode ("LED") attached to the body and electrically connected to the utility port through the plug and the body;

wherein the LED is powered by the power source when the apparatus is plugged into the utility port.

15. An apparatus as recited in claim 14, wherein the LED is a white light diode.

5 16. An apparatus as recited in claim 15, wherein the portable computing device is an electronic game device.

17. An apparatus as recited in claim 16, wherein the plug has a second utility port adapted to receive a second plug that is in electrical communication with the utility port when the second plug is plugged into the plug and the plug is plugged into the utility port.

18. An apparatus as recited in claim 16, wherein the body is comprised of a flexible arm.

19. An apparatus as recited in claim 16, wherein the body can be adjusted, when the apparatus is plugged into the utility port, to adjust the height of the LED relative to the portable computing device.

20. An apparatus as recited in claim 16, wherein the body can be adjusted, when the apparatus is plugged into the utility port, to adjust the angle of the LED relative to the portable computing device.

21. An apparatus as recited in claim 16, wherein the body further comprises a diffuser for diffusing light given off by the LED.

22. An apparatus as recited in claim 21, wherein the body further comprises a magnifier.

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Docket No.

241/057

Declaration and Power of Attorney For Patent Application

English Language Declaration

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name,

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

APPARATUS FOR ILLUMINATING A PORTABLE ELECTRONIC OR COMPUTING DEVICE

the specification of which

(check one)

☐ is attached hereto.

☒ Was filed on June 11, 1999 as United States Application No. or PCT International

Application Number 09/330,322

and was amended on _____

(if applicable)

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the United States Patent and Trademark Office all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, Section 119(a)-(d) or Section 365(b) of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate, or Section 365(a) of any PCT International application which designated at least one country other than the United States, listed below and have also identified below, by checking the box, any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate or PCT International application having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed.

Prior Foreign Application(s)

Priority Not Claimed

(Number)

(Country)

(Day/Month/Year Filed)

☐

(Number)

(Country)

(Day/Month/Year Filed)

☐

(Number)

(Country)

(Day/Month/Year Filed)

☐

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U.S.C. Section 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below:

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(Filing Date)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U. S. C. Section 120 of any United States application(s), or Section 365(c) of any PCT International application designating the United States, listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States or PCT International application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. Section 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the United States Patent and Trademark Office all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, C. F. R., Section 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT International filing date of this application:

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Status)
(patented, pending, abandoned)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Status)
(patented, pending, abandoned)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Status)
(patented, pending, abandoned)

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

POWER OF ATTORNEY: As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or agent(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith. *(list name and registration number)*

See attached list

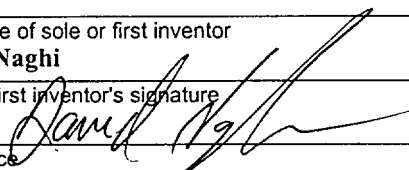
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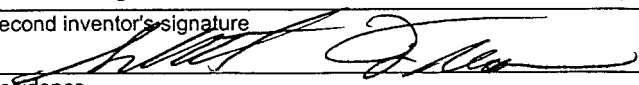
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(54) **APPARATUS FOR ILLUMINATING A
 PORTABLE ELECTRONIC OR COMPUTING
 DEVICE**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this
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This patent is subject to a terminal dis-
 claimer.

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(52) U.S. Cl. **362/85**; 362/84; 362/253;
 362/285; 362/109; 362/198; 362/311; 362/197

(58) Field of Search 362/85, 84, 253,
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Primary Examiner—Stephen Husar

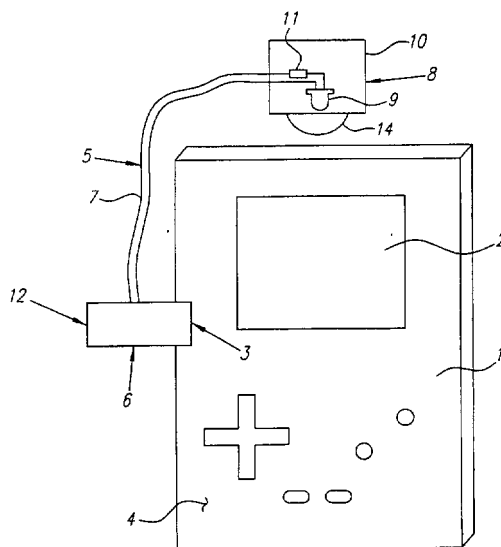
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(57) ABSTRACT

An illumination device that can use a white light diode in a
 flexible arm plugs into, and is powered through, a utility
 power jack of a portable computing device or a utility port
 of a portable computing device.

18 Claims, 1 Drawing Sheet



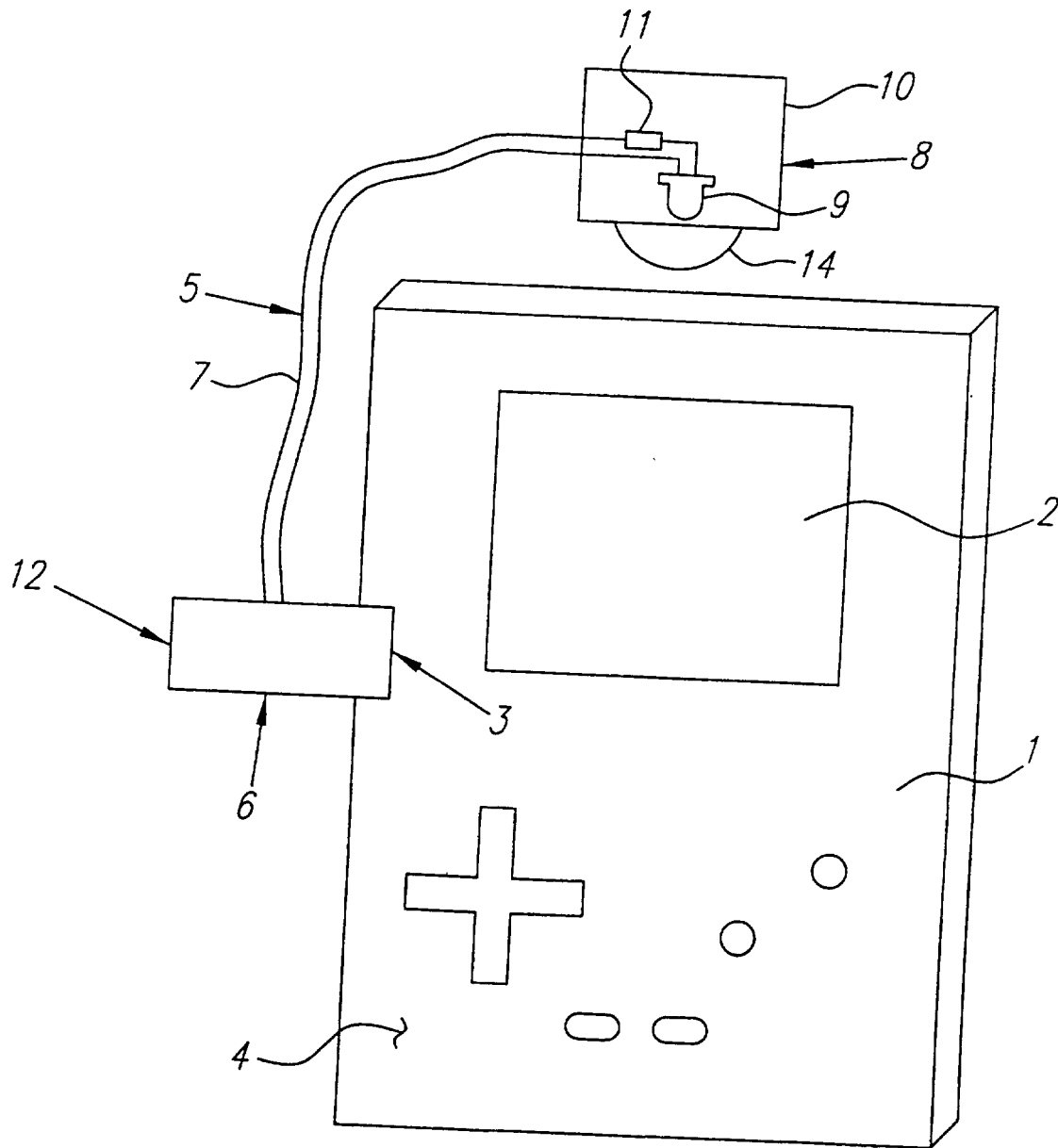


FIG. 1